



## Marlton Woman's Club

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Spellbound: Van Zant Students Compete in 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Spelling Bee**

MARLTON – The competitors walked into the gym at J. Harold Van Zant Elementary School, ready for this year's tournament. They had been practicing diligently for tonight and improving their skills. As start time neared, some practiced breathing. Some found a corner for last minute practice. Some were chatty, others pensive, others excited. Parents, siblings and teachers looked on from the stands as competitors all took to the gym floor with one goal – to outlast the competition and become the champion.

The spelling bee champion.

On January 25, 23 brave fourth and fifth grade students at Van Zant Elementary gathered for the Marlton Woman's Club's 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Spelling Bee, held for the first time at Van Zant School. The contest was open to all fourth and fifth graders and the opportunity was encouraged by Principal DiBlasi. Twenty-three talented, bright students took up the challenge, donned number cards and battled their classmates for bragging rights.

After a warm-up practice round, students walked to the microphone (itself daunting for this age group) and were provided a word to spell. Words began in simpler forms (poem, Vermont, accused, lettuce) and escalated to more difficult words like turquoise, receipt, loneliness and whiskers. Capital letters needed to be pronounced on proper nouns, competitors could not try again if they made an error, and all were encouraged to speak in clear, slow voices. Winners advanced, while those who missed their attempt did not.

As the rounds continued and difficulty increased, finalists slowly emerged ... fourth grader Hunter Cardone and fifth graders Safeena Bhimani, Maria Dibonito and Jaylin Majette each had successfully spelled every word. Then a misstep by Dibonito followed by a Majette miss the next round left just Cardone and Bhimani standing. Cardone received the word "acquainted" and misspelled the word, allowing Bhimani the opportunity to correctly spell it to advance. She did, and tension grew as the announcer indicated the final word the fifth grader would need to spell correctly to win. Bhimani slowly and correctly spelled c-a-r-b-o-h-y-d-r-a-t-e to applause and the title of Spelling Bee Champion.

First, second and third place winners received gift cards to Barnes and Noble, and the top three finishers (Bhimani, Cardone and Majette) will advance to the District spelling bee, sponsored by the New Jersey State Federation of Women's Clubs.

The spelling bee is a sponsored event of the NJSFWC, of which the Marlton Woman's Club is a member. Women's clubs throughout New Jersey hold local spelling bees as part of the organization's focus on education. Winners advance to regional and state competitions.

For more information on the Marlton Woman's Club visit [www.marltonwomansclub.com](http://www.marltonwomansclub.com).



*Captions page three*

**Captions:**

*The three winners from the Marlton Woman's Club Spelling Bee pose with their principal Nick DiBlasi; (L-R) first place winner Safeena Bhimani (7); Principal DiBlasi; third place winner Jaylin Majette (11) and second place winner Hunter Cardone (27). All three winners will advance to the District spelling bee.*

*It was a great evening at Van Zant School for the fourth and fifth grade participants in the Marlton Woman's Club 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Spelling Bee – the first time the event had been held at Van Zant School. June Adair (L), Spelling Bee Chairperson, Principal Nick DiBlasi and (R) Lisa Levin, club president, congratulate the students.*

*Well done! June Adair (R), coordinator of the Spelling Bee, handed out certificates, trophies and Barnes and Noble gift cards to the top three finalists, who all performed very well in the competition.*